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2001HANOI00919 - CONFIDENTIAL

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ACTION EAP-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	ACQ-00	CIAE-00	SMEC-00	DINT-00	DOTE-00
	SRPP-00	DS-00	EB-00	FAAE-00	FBIE-00	VC-00	H-01
	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00	L-00	VCE-00	AC-01	NSAE-00
	OIC-02	OMB-01	OPIC-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	ACE-00
	P-00	SP-00	SSO-00	STR-00	USIE-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00
	PRM-01	DRL-02	G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00	/009W	

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FM AMEMBASSY HANOI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2598
INFO ASEAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY
USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI//J5/FPA// PRIORITY
DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY
DEPTTREAS WASHDC PRIORITY
USDOC WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 HANOI 000919

SIPDIS

STATE FOR S/S-O, EAP, EAP/BCLTV, DRL, INR
STATE PASS USTR DAMOND
NSC FOR EAST ASIAN DIRECTORATE
SECDEF FOR ISA/EAP STERN
USDOC FOR 4431/MAC/AP/OKSA/HPPHO
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 2/18/2011

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [VM](#) [DPOL](#)

SUBJECT: LEANER POLITBURO AND CENTRAL COMMITTEE TO BE UNVEILED AT WEEKEND COMMUNIST PARTY CONGRESS

REF: A) HANOI 905 B) HANOI 638

11. (U) CLASSIFIED BY POLITICAL COUNSELOR JAMES BRUNO;
REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D).

12. (C) SUMMARY: FOUR NEW POLITBURO MEMBERS -- REPORTEDLY INCLUDING MASS MOBILIZATION HEAD DUOC AND FORMER LABOR MINISTER HOAN -- ARE EXPECTED TO JOIN A SLIMMED-DOWN, 15-MEMBER LEADERSHIP TO BE UNVEILED AT THE NINTH PARTY CONGRESS, WHICH OPENS APRIL 19. ON BALANCE, THE NEW POLITBURO, EXPECTED TO BE HEADED BY ASSEMBLY SPEAKER MANH, SHOULD BE MORE SUPPORTIVE OF ECONOMIC REFORM. SEVEN MOSTLY OLDER MEMBERS ARE EXPECTED TO RETIRE, INCLUDING GENERAL SECRETARY PHIEU, FATHERLAND FRONT LEADER DUYET, AND

SIPDIS
PEOPLE'S ARMY POLITICAL COMMISSAR NGAN. IN A SURPRISE, SEVERAL SOURCES SAY DEFENSE MINISTER TRA, RECENTLY DISCIPLINED BY THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE, WILL RETAIN HIS SEAT AS THE LONE MILITARY MAN IN THE BODY. THE LATEST REPORTS WE HEAR ARE THAT PM KHAI WILL REMAIN IN PLACE, PERHAPS FOR ANOTHER YEAR. HCMC PARTY CHIEF TRIET, POPULAR AMONG HIS CENTRAL COMMITTEE PEERS, IS SAID BY SEVERAL SOURCES TO BE HIS HEIR APPARENT. OTHERS SAY FIRST DEPUTY PM DUNG WILL RETAIN HIS DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER SLOT FOR THE TIME BEING. WE EXPECT THE LEANER, 150-MEMBER CENTRAL COMMITTEE ALSO TO BE marginally more assertive with the POLITBURO AND
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SUPPORTIVE OF ECONOMIC REFORM. END SUMMARY.

PARTY CONGRESS TO APPROVE NEW POLITBURO

13. (C) THE 1,168 VOTING DELEGATES TO THE NINTH COMMUNIST PARTY CONGRESS (TWO OTHERS ARE ILL) WILL FORMALLY MEET APRIL 19-22 IN BA DINH HALL TO APPROVE THE FOUR SEMINAL POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC DOCUMENTS OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY (CPV) AND TO APPROVE THE NEW LEADERSHIP LINEUP. AS CITED REF A, GENERAL SECRETARY LE KHA PHIEU APPEARS HIGHLY LIKELY TO BE REPLACED BY NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SPEAKER NONG DUC MANH, ACCORDING TO A NUMBER OF SOURCES. SEVERAL SOURCES REPORT MANH, INITIALLY RELUCTANT TO TAKE THE SUPREME POST, AGREED TO DO SO AFTER REQUESTS FROM CPV ELDERS AND WINNING A STRONG VOTE OF SUPPORT FROM THE DELEGATES. AT THE SAME TIME, OTHER REPORTS CONTINUE TO CIRCULATE THAT CPV ORGANIZATIONAL AFFAIRS CHIEF NGUYEN VAN AN WAS CONSIDERED

ON THE LAST DAY OF THE PRE-CONGRESS FOR THE TOP SLOT. IN ANY EVENT, THE PROGRAM FOR THE CONGRESS NOTABLY OMITTS THE NAME OF THE GENERAL SECRETARY AT THE END OF THE CONGRESS, WHILE LISTING PHIEU AT THE BEGINNING. (COMMENT: WE EXPECT MANH TO BE UNVEILED THE AFTERNOON OF APRIL 22 WHEN THE RESULTS OF THE APRIL 21 CONGRESS ELECTIONS ARE FORMALLY ANNOUNCED, BUT THIS OPAQUE LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE HAS SURPRISED US BEFORE, SO WE'LL WAIT FOR THE SOLOIST IN THIS CPV OPERA TO FINISH HER LAST ARIA BEFORE PRONOUNCING WITH CERTAINTY. END COMMENT.)

14. (C) THE CONVENTIONAL WISDOM AMONG CPV-CONNECTED SOURCES IS THAT FOUR NEW MEMBERS ARE EXPECTED TO JOIN A SLIMMED-CONFIDENTIAL

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DOWN, 15-MEMBER POLITBURO. WE HEAR DIFFERENT NAMES FROM DIFFERENT SOURCES. HEAD OF THE CPV'S MASS MOBILIZATION ORGANIZATION, TRUONG QUANG DUOC, AND FORMER LABOR MINISTER NGUYEN DINH HOAN ARE COMMON TO MOST LISTS. BOTH SEEM PLAUSIBLE CHOICES. THE HEAD OF MASS MOBILIZATION TRADITIONALLY HAS BEEN A POLITBURO MEMBER, AND THIS IS THE POST PHAM THE DUYET PREVIOUSLY HELD. GIVEN UNREST IN THE CENTRAL HIGHLANDS AND THE NEED TO RALLY POPULAR SUPPORT FOR CPV POSITIONS AROUND THE COUNTRY, THIS MAKES SENSE. LIKEWISE, WE HAVE HEARD FROM A CLOSE WORKING CONTACT (STRICTLY PROTECT) AT THE LABOR MINISTRY, WHO CONSIDERS HOAN HIS MENTOR, THAT HE BELIEVES HE MAY BE MOVING ON TO WORK WITH HOAN WHEN HE MOVES UP TO THE POLITBURO. (COMMENT: WE KNOW LITTLE ABOUT DUOC BUT HIS CURRENT PORTFOLIO IS HIGHLY FOCUSED ON IDEOLOGICAL AND CPV ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS. HOAN IS AN ADVOCATE OF MORE RAPID ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL REFORM, AND IS SEEN BY A FORMER DEPUTY AS A PROGRESSIVE. END COMMENT)

15. (C) THE OTHER TWO POLITBURO SLOTS ARE MORE MUDDLED. ONE CPV SOURCE SAYS CULTURE AND INFORMATION MINISTER NGUYEN KHOA DIEM AND THE DEPUTY HEAD OF THE CPV CONTROL COMMISSION, LE HONG ANH, ARE THE OTHER TWO TAPPED FOR THE ELITE BODY. HOWEVER, EARLIER IN THE WEEK WE HEARD THAT TRADE MINISTER VU KHOAN AND DEPUTY PM KHIEM WERE SLATED FOR THIS PROMOTION. (COMMENT: RUMORS CIRCULATE THAT VU KHOAN IS ALMOST CERTAIN TO TAKE THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER DUTIES OF RETIRING NGUYEN MANH CAM, WHO IS ALSO A POLITBURO MEMBER. THE QUESTION IS WHETHER KHOAN WILL TAKE OVER EITHER THE POLITBURO SEAT AND POSSIBLY THE FOREIGN MINISTER POST. END COMMENT.)

16. (C) SEVEN MOSTLY OLDER POLITBURO MEMBERS ARE EXPECTED TO STEP DOWN. WE BELIEVE THEY WILL BE CPV GENERAL SECRETARY PHIEU, FATHERLAND FRONT HEAD DUYET, PEOPLE'S ARMY POLITICAL COMMISSAR GEN. PHAM THANH NGAN (WHO REPORTEDLY WILL FALL WITH HIS MENTOR PHIEU), DEPUTY PM CAM, HO CHI MINH POLITICAL ACADEMY DIRECTOR NGUYEN DUC BINH, CPV IDEOLOGICAL AFFAIRS DIRECTOR LE XUAN TUNG, AND CPV CONTROL COMMISSION CHAIRWOMAN NGUYEN THI XUAN MY. WE HAVE LONG BELIEVED CAM, BINH, AND TUNG WERE RIPE TO STEP DOWN. PHIEU'S AND DUYET'S BATTLES TO RETAIN THEIR POSTS OVER THE PAST MONTHS HAVE BEEN WELL DOCUMENTED. LIKEWISE, MY WAS STRONGLY CRITICIZED FOR HER POOR MANAGEMENT OF THE CRITICISM/SELF-CRITICISM CAMPAIGN, BUT THE CONVENTIONAL WISDOM UNTIL THIS PAST WEEK WAS THE CPV WOULD NOT WANT TO REMOVE THE ONLY WOMAN EVER APPOINTED TO THE POLITBURO.

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17. (C) THE MOST INTERESTING NAME ON THIS LIST, NGAN, IS CLOSELY TIED TO THE MOST INTERESTING OMISSION, TRA. GEN. NGAN HAS LONG BEEN SEEN AS ONE OF THE POTENTIAL "COMERS" AMONG THE POLITBURO, BUT IT HAS BEEN CLEAR HIS RAPID RECENT RISE WAS CLOSELY TIED TO PHIEU'S. HE FOLLOWED PHIEU AS POLITICAL COMMISSAR OF THE ARMED FORCES, AND OVER THE PAST YEAR SEVERAL MILITARY SOURCES SUGGESTED HE WAS DESTINED FOR HIGHER THINGS. CONVERSELY, THE AGING DEFENSE MINISTER TRA WAS SHARPLY RAPPED ON THE KNUCKLES BY THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE ONLY WEEKS AGO, IN PART FOR THE VIOLATIONS OF VIETNAMESE AIRSPACE BY VIETNAMESE-AMERICAN SELF-DESCRIBED "FREEDOM FIGHTER" LY TONG. THAT REPRIMAND SEEMED TO FORESHADOW HIS LIKELY RETIREMENT FROM HIS GOVERNMENT AND POLITBURO POSTS. WE SUSPECT TRA MAY HAVE BEEN RETAINED EITHER AS A SOP TO PHIEU LOYALISTS, OR AS PART OF OTHER BARGAINING WITH MILITARY SUPPORTERS. STRIKINGLY, IF THE CURRENT FORECASTED LINE-UP HOLDS, TRA WOULD BE THE ONLY MILITARY REPRESENTATIVE IN THE POLITBURO.

KHAI REPORTED TO STAY ON AS PRIME MINISTER

18. (C) CONTRARY TO REPORTS IN REF A, THE LATEST REPORTS WE HEAR ARE THAT PRIME MINISTER PHAN VAN KHAI WILL REMAIN IN PLACE FOR THE TIME BEING, PERHAPS FOR ANOTHER YEAR. HCMC PARTY CHIEF NGUYEN MINH TRIET, WHO POLLED SIGNIFICANT SUPPORT AMONG HIS CENTRAL COMMITTEE PEERS IN SEVERAL BALLOTS OVER THE PAST TWO WEEKS, APPARENTLY IS SEEN BY MANY AS HEIR APPARENT. HOWEVER, FOR THE TIME BEING, IT APPEARS

FIRST DEPUTY PM NGUYEN TAN DUNG WILL RETAIN HIS SLOT AND
THUS A PLAUSIBLE CLAIM AS PM-IN-WAITING. (COMMENT: TRIET,
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DUNG AND TRUONG TAN SANG HAVE LONG BEEN SEEN AS THE
YOUNGER, MORE DYNAMIC SOUTHERN REFORMERS MOST LIKELY TO
TAKE OVER FROM KHAI. END COMMENT.)

19. (SBU) SOURCES SUGGEST THE NEW CENTRAL COMMITTEE WILL
HAVE 150 MEMBERS (VERSUS 170 FOR THAT ELECTED IN 1996).
CPV BRIEFERS SAID APRIL 18 THE CPV WOULD EMPHASIZE "QUALITY
OVER QUANTITY" AS PART OF ITS STREAMLINING. CPV OFFICIALS
TOLD THE PRESS THE CPV WOULD BRING BACK A SECRETARIAT STAFF
THAT WOULD RUN THE DAY-TO-DAY AFFAIRS OF THE POLITBURO.

COMMENT

110. (C) IF THE FORECASTED LINE-UPS ARE CONFIRMED APRIL 22,
THE NEW LEANER LEADERSHIP BODIES OF THE CPV LOOK TO BE
MODESTLY MORE SUPPORTIVE OF INCREASING THE PACE OF ECONOMIC
REFORM. NOTABLE IS THAT MOST OF THE IDEOLOGICAL DEADWOOD
OF THE SEPTUAGENARIANS IN THE POLITBURO WILL BE RETIRED.
SOME OF THE YOUNGER MEMBERS LIKELY WILL PROVIDE MORE VIGOR
IN PRESSING THE REFORM PROGRAM. THAT SAID, THIS IS A
COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP, AND THE SCREEDES AGAINST THE U.S. IN
THE PRESS AND THE REFLEXIVE HARPING ON THE DANGERS OF
"PEACEFUL EVOLUTION" INDICATE REFORM CHANGES WILL BE
GRADUAL AND MEASURED. MANH IS A COALITION BUILDER, AND
THOUGH PERHAPS LESS WELL-REPRESENTED IN THE TOP RANK, THE
MILITARY, PUBLIC SECURITY AND CPV IDEOLOGUES STILL COMMAND
IMPORTANT SEATS AT THE TABLE. END COMMENT.
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